

11/44/ ** FLASH **

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PAGE 001

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ZZ RUEA11B
 ZNY CCCCC ZDC STATE ZZH
 UTS0051
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 DE RUEHBL #1728 2960808
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 Z 230807Z OCT 83 ZFF4
 FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
 TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 3955
 INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE 1292
 RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE 1181
 RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 1837
 RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE 1456
 RUEHJI/AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE 1299
 RUEHRH/USELD RIYADH IMMEDIATE 1069
 RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE 1687
 RUFHBA/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA IMMEDIATE 0362
 RUGMOG/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA IMMEDIATE 0324
 RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
 RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
 RUEKJCS/JCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
 RUSNNGA/USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
 RHDLCNE/CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK IMMEDIATE
 RUFRQJG/COMSIXTHFLT IMMEDIATE
 RUFRMDA/CTF SIX ZERO IMMEDIATE
 RUFRMKA/CTF SIX ONE IMMEDIATE
 RUFRMKA/CTF SIX TWO IMMEDIATE
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PAGE 002
TUR: 230817Z OCT 83

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CASABLANCA FOR ADS

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINS, ASEC, MOPS, LE, FR, US
SUBJECT: MAJOR BOMB ATTACK ON US AND FRENCH MNF
CONTINGENT - SITUATION AS OF 0830 LOCAL

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT).

2. AT 0622Z LOCAL SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23, A VEHICLE LOADED WITH EXPLOSIVES DEMOLISHED THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE USMNF BATTALION LANDING TEAM AT THE BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (BIA). THE USMNF HEADQUARTERS ESTIMATES THAT AT LEAST TWO HUNDRED PEOPLE WERE IN THE BUILDING, WHICH SERVES ALSO AS BARRACKS, AT THE TIME. THEY BELIEVE MOST OF THE PERSONNEL IN THE BUILDING ARE NOW DEAD. (SIMULTANEOUSLY, A FRENCH MNF SUBORDINATE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING WAS SEVERELY DAMAGED BY AN EXPLOSION IN AN ADJACENT BUILDING IN THE RAMLET AL BAYDA AREA. WE HAVE FEW DETAILS AT THIS TIME, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE AT LEAST 10 DEAD AND MANY MORE WOUNDED).

3. THE US MARINE BLT IS A SUBORDINATE UNIT TO THE 24TH MARINE AMPHIBIOUS UNIT WHICH MAKES UP THE USMNF PRESENCE IN BEIRUT. THE COMMANDER OF THE 24TH MAU, COL. TIMOTHY GERAGHTY, IS UNHURT AND IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION. HIS HEADQUARTERS, IN A NEARBY BUILDING CONTINUES TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY. SURVIVORS AND BODIES ARE STILL BEING EVACUATED FROM THE RUINS OF THE BLT BUILDING. RED CROSS AND OTHER LEBANESE DISASTER RELIEF PERSONNEL ARE ON THE SCENE, AND HEAVY EQUIPMENT IS BEING USED TO CLEAR THE WRECKAGE. WOUNDED PERSONNEL ARE BEING EVACUATED TO THE ITALIAN MNF FIELD HOSPITAL NEAR SABRA/SHATILA REFUGEE CAMP, TO US NAVY SHIPS OFFSHORE, AND PROBABLY TO LOCAL HOSPITALS AS WELL. FRENCH WOUNDED ARE ALSO BEING SENT TO THE ITALIAN HOSPITAL AND TO LOCAL HOSPITALS. LEBANESE ARMED FORCES ARE ON THE SCENE PROVIDING ASSISTANCE.

4. AS THE USMNF CONTINGENT RECONSTRUCTS THE INCIDENT.

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STATE

83 2459933 SCZ

PAGE 003
TUR: 230617Z OCT 83

NC 2459933

A TRUCK LOADED WITH EXPLOSIVES WAS DRIVEN INTO AN AIRPORT PARKING LOT IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF THE BLT BUILDING. IT CRASHED THROUGH A METAL GATE, PAST MARINE DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AND INTO THE LOBBY OF THE BUILDING. THE BUILDING IS ABOUT 50 METERS NORTH OF THE EDGE OF THE PARKING LOT. THE LOBBY EXTENDED THE FULL HEIGHT OF THE 4 OR 5 STORY BUILDING, AND THE TRUCK APPARENTLY EXPLODED IN THE CENTER OF THE BUILDING, PEELING IT OUTWARD IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

5. CODEL HUMPHREY, WHICH HAD ARRIVED IN BEIRUT THE PREVIOUS EVENING, HAD SPENT THE NIGHT ON BOARD THE USS IWO JIMA OFFSHORE AND HAD NOT COME ASHORE. THE EMBASSY IS ADVISING THE SENATOR TO REMAIN ON BOARD SHIP UNTIL THE SITUATION HAS CLARIFIED.

6. AMBASSADOR BARTHOLOMEW WILL BE VISITING THE SCENE SHORTLY.
BARTHOLOMEW

END OF MESSAGE

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